

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis LXV:9

9. AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT WHEN ISAAC WAS OLD. Rabbi Yehudah ben Shimon said: Abraham requested [the a man should experience] old age,¹ pleading before Him: 'Sovereign of the Universe! When a man and his son enter a town, none know whom to honor! But if Thou wilt crown him [the father] with [the appearance of] old age, one will know whom to honor.' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'As thou livest, thou hast asked well, and it will commence with thee.' Thus from the beginning of the Book until here old age is not mentioned, but when Abraham arose [the experience of] old age was granted to him: "And Abraham was old, well stricken in age" (Gen XXIV, 1). Isaac demanded suffering, pleading thus: 'Sovereign of the Universe! When a man dies without previous suffering, the attribute of judgment is stretched out against him; but if Thou causest him to suffer, the attribute of judgment will not be stretched out against him.'² Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'By thy life, thou hast asked well, and I will commence with thee.' Thus suffering is not mentioned from the beginning of the Book until here: "AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT WHEN ISAAC WAS OLD, AND HIS EYES WERE DIM". Jacob demanded illness, saying to Him: 'Sovereign of the Universe! A man dies without previous illness and does not settle his affairs with his children; but if he were ill two or three days, he would settle his affairs with his children.' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'By thy life, thou hast asked well, and it will commence

(1) Until Abraham old and young looked alike (B.M. 87a).

(2) For through suffering he will have expiated some at least of his misdeeds.

with thee.' Hence, "And one said to Joseph: Behold, thy father is sick" (ib. XLVIII, 1). Rabbi Levi said: Thus Abraham introduced old age, Isaac suffering, and Jacob illness. Hezekiah introduced repeated sickness.¹ Said he to Him: 'Thou hast kept him in good health until the day of his death; but if a man falls sick and recovers, falls sick and recovers, he will fully repent.' Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: 'By thy life! thou hast asked well, and with thee will I commence.' Thus it is written, "The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness" (Isa. XXXVIII, 9). Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said: This intimates that between one sickness and another he had an illness more severe than both.²

(1) Till his time there was only one sickness-that which preceded death.

(2) E.J.: between this sickness and his fatal sickness there was another. This is deduced from 'Of his sickness', which is really superfluous, and therefore understood to hint at another illness.

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis IX:5

5. In the copy of R. Meir's Torah [Pentateuch] was found written: AND, BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD: and behold, death was good.¹ Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said: I

was seated on my grandfather's shoulder going up from my own town to Kefar Hana via Beth-Shean,² and I heard Rabbi Shimon ben Rabbi Eleazar as he sat and lectured say in Rabbi Meir's name: AND, BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD: and, behold, death was good.³ Rabbi Hama ben Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Yonatan said the following. Rabbi Hama ben Rabbi Hanina said: Adam deserved to be spared the experience of death. Why then was the penalty of death decreed against him? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that Nebuchadnezzar and Hiram would declare themselves gods; therefore was death decreed against him. Thus it is written, Thou wast in Eden the garden of God (Ezek. XXVIII, 13): was then Hiram in Eden? Surely not! But He said thus to him: 'It is thou who causedst him who was in Eden to die.' R. Hiyya, the son of R. Berekiah's daughter, quoted in R. Berekiah's name: Thou wast the far-covering cherub--kerub (ib. 14): it was thou who didst cause that youth

(1) This may mean either that the MS. read מוֹת instead of מַאֲד , or that this was inserted as a marginal comment.

(2) Scythopolis, in Galilee; v. 'A.Z. (Sonc. ed.), p. 64, n. 7.

(3) Because it is a potent force for repentance.

(robeh--sc. Adam) to die. Said Rabbi Yonatan to him: If so, He should have decreed death for the wicked but not for the righteous! But the reason is lest the wicked perform a fraudulent repentance, saying: 'Surely the righteous live only because they treasure up religious acts and good deeds; so shall we too lay up a store of religious acts and good deeds,' and as a result their performance of such would be with ulterior motives. Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish discussed this. Rabbi Yohanan said: Why was death decreed against the wicked? Because as long as the wicked live they anger the Lord, as it is written, Ye have wearied the Lord with your words (Mal. II, 17); but when they die they cease to anger Him as it is written, There the wicked cease from raging (Job III, 17), which means, there the wicked cease from enraging the Holy One, blessed be He. Why was death decreed against the righteous? Because as long as the righteous live they must fight against their evil desires, but when they die they enjoy rest; that is the meaning of 'And there the weary are at rest' (ib.): [they say]: We have laboured sufficiently.¹ Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: [Death was decreed] in order to reward the righteous in double measure and to punish the wicked in double measure. To reward the righteous, who had not deserved to experience death, yet did accept the experience of death: Therefore in their land they shall possess double (Isa. LXI, 7); and to punish the wicked, since the righteous had not deserved death yet accepted it on their account; therefore, And destroy them with double destruction (Jer. XVII, 18).

(1) M.K.: in our fight against evil; Y.T.: we have laboured to attain a sufficient reward.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Avoda Zara, page 54b

MISHNAH. THE ELDERS²¹ IN ROME WERE ASKED, 'IF [YOUR GOD] HAS NO DESIRE FOR IDOLATRY, WHY DOES HE NOT ABOLISH IT?' THEY REPLIED, 'IF IT WAS

SOMETHING UNNECESSARY TO THE WORLD THAT WAS WORSHIPPED, HE WOULD ABOLISH IT; BUT PEOPLE WORSHIP THE SUN, MOON, STARS AND PLANETS; SHOULD HE DESTROY HIS UNIVERSE ON ACCOUNT OF FOOLS!' THEY SAID [TO THE ELDERS], 'IF SO, HE SHOULD DESTROY WHAT IS UNNECESSARY FOR THE WORLD AND LEAVE WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE WORLD!' THEY REPLIED, '[IF HE DID THAT], WE SHOULD MERELY BE STRENGTHENING THE HANDS OF THE WORSHIPPERS OF THESE,²² BECAUSE THEY WOULD SAY, "BE SURE THAT THESE ARE DEITIES, FOR BEHOLD THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABOLISHED!"'

GEMARA. Our Rabbis taught: Philosophers asked the elders in Rome, 'If your God has no desire for idolatry, why does He not abolish it?' They replied, 'If it was something of which the world has no need that was worshipped, He would abolish it; but people worship the sun, moon, stars and planets; should He destroy the Universe on account of fools! The world pursues its natural course, and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an account. Another illustration: Suppose a man stole a measure of wheat and went and sowed it in the ground; it is right that it should not grow, but the world pursues its natural course and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an account. Another illustration: Suppose a man has intercourse with his neighbour's wife; it is right that she should not conceive, but the world pursues its natural course and as for the fools who act wrongly, they will have to render an account.' This is similar to what R. Simeon b. Lakish said: The Holy One, blessed be He, declared, Not enough that the wicked put My coinage to vulgar use, but they trouble Me and compel Me to set My seal thereon!²³

(21) They were R. Gamaliel, Eleazar b. Azariah, Joshua b. Hananiah and Akiba, who visited Rome in 95 C.E. V. Bacher, *Agada d. Tann*, I, p. 84, and the authorities quoted by him.

(22) The essential things which God spared.

(23) The wicked make wrong use of the sexual instinct with which they have been endowed by God and trouble Him to form the embryo which results from their immorality.

Midrash on Psalms (Buber) psalm 8

And so it was at the giving of the Torah, when the Holy One blessed be He came to give Torah to Israel at Sinai, the angels begin presenting arguments to the Holy One blessed by He, saying 'What is man that thou should be mindful of him', 'God our master, how great is Your name in all that earth, that you have put your majesty upon the heavens', and they said before Him: Master of the Universe, it is more befitting for you to give the Torah here in the heavens, because we are holy and pure, and the Torah is holy and pure; we are alive, and your Torah is the tree of life, it is better that it be with us. He answered them: it is not fitting that it be in the upper realms, as it is said: 'Should it not be found in the land of the living?' (Job 28:13), and is there land in the upper realms? Where should it be? - In the lower realms, as it is said: 'It is I who made the earth and created man upon it' (Isaiah

45:12). Rebbi Nechemya in the name of Rebbi Yehudah says: it may be compared to a man who had a son who was missing one his fingers, and his father sent him to learn flax combing, silk processing and other similar skills, trades that require all the fingers. After some time, his father traveled to him and said to him: Why did you not teach these skills to my son? He replied: These skills require all the fingers, while your son is missing one finger, and you ask me to teach him flax combing and silk processing! So said the Holy One blessed be He: The Torah cannot be by you, because there is no reproduction among you, nor is there impurity, or death or disease. Rather all of you are holy, while in the Torah it is written: 'If a man will die in a tent' (Numbers 19:14), 'This is the procedure for a leper' (Leviticus 14:2), 'If a woman will conceive' (Leviticus 12:2), 'If a woman will have a menstrual flow' (Leviticus 15:25), 'This you should not eat' (Leviticus 11:4). That is why it says: 'Should it not be found in the land of the living?' (Job 28:13).

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yevamoth pages 49b - 50a

Concerning the number of thy days I will fulfil, 26 Tannaim are in disagreement. For it was taught: The number of thy days I will fulfill 26 refers to the years of the generations.¹ If one is worthy one is allowed to complete the full period; if unworthy. the number is reduced; so R. Akiba. But the Sages said: If one is worthy years are added to one's life; ² if unworthy, the years of his life are reduced.

(26) Ex. XXIII, 26, but will not make any additions.

(1) The span of life allotted to every human being at his birth.

(2) The meaning of fulfill is addition to the allotted span of life.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Hagigah pages 4b – 5a

R. Joseph, when he came to the [following] verse, wept: But there is that is swept away without judgment.²⁷ [He said]:²⁸ Is there anyone who passes away before one's [allotted] time?²⁹ — Yes, as in the story [heard] by R. Bibi b. Abaye,³⁰ who was frequently visited by the Angel of death. [Once] the latter said to his messenger: Go, bring me Miriam, the women's hairdresser!³¹ He went and brought him Miriam, the children's nurse. Said he to him:³² I told thee Miriam, the women's hairdresser. He answered: If so, I will take her back. Said he to him: Since thou hast brought her, let her be added.³³ But how were you able to get her?³⁴ She was holding a shovel in her hand and was heating

(27) Prov. XIII, 23.

(28) Rashi and Tosaf. delete the words: the question is then asked by the Gemara.

(29) I.e., although the person has committed no sin to merit shortening of life.

(30) An occultist; cf. Ber. 6a where he performed an experiment with the object of seeing demons.

(31) Supposed by Tosaf. to be the Mother of Jesus; cf. Shab. 104b in the earlier uncensored editions. [Her description megaddela (hairdresser) is connected by some with the name of Mary Magdalene whose name was confused with that of

Mary, the mother of Jesus, v. Herford R.T. Christianity in Talmud and Midrash, pp. 40f].

(32) I.e., the Angel of death to his messenger.

(33) I.e., to the dead.

(34) Since it was not yet her time to die.

and raking¹ the oven. She took it and put it on her foot and burnt herself; thus her luck was impaired and I brought her. Said R. Bibi b. Abaye to him² : Have ye³ permission to act thus? He answered him: Is it not written: 'There is that is swept away without judgment'? He countered: But behold it is written: One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh!⁴ He replied: I have charge of them⁵ till they have completed the generation,⁶ and then I hand them over to Dumah!⁷ He [then] asked him: But after all, what do you do with her years?⁸ He replied: If there be a Rabbinic scholar who overlooks his hurt, I shall give them to him in her stead.⁹

(1) I.e., raked the fire in (Jast.); Rashi: raked it out.

(2) I.e., the Angel of death.

(3) I.e., the Angel of death and his messenger.

(4) Eccl. I, 4; implying that every generation is complete.

(5) Lit., 'shepherd them'.

(6) I.e., the years allotted to them.

(7) Lit., 'Silence', the Angel in charge of the dead.

(8) I.e., the remaining years which she should have continued to live.

(9) Cf. the ref. to Hezekiah in Yeb. 49a-50a.

Talmud of the Land of Israel, Tractate Shabat, chapter 14, halacha 3

Rav and Rav Chiya the Great – both of them said that ninety-nine die by the eye, and one dies by the hands of heaven.

Rebbi Haninah and Shmuel – both of them said that ninety-nine die through exposure to cold, and one by the hands of heaven.

Rebbi Shmuel ben Nachman said in the name of Rebbi Yonatan that ninety-nine die by heat wave, and one by the hands of heaven.

And the sages said that ninety-nine die as a result of negligence, and one by the hand of heaven.